

September Signpost

for the

GOOD RED ROAD



St. Tekakwitha

Opening prayer:

God of all nations
and peoples. You
have filled Your
Creation with

Your mighty presence. Through Your handiwork You speak to our heard words that satisfy our every desire.

You called Your servant the Mohawk maiden Saint Kateri Tekakwitha to embrace the Gospel of your Son Jesus Christ to do Your will and to serve others with the gifts You gave her.

May she who held tight to the cross of Your Son through her short life marred by sickness suffering and persecution, be our intercessor during our own trials. May her embrace of the Catholic faith and her openness to sharing Jesus with others inspire us to be new evangelizers to all cultures and peoples.

Direction

Autumn

Fall

West

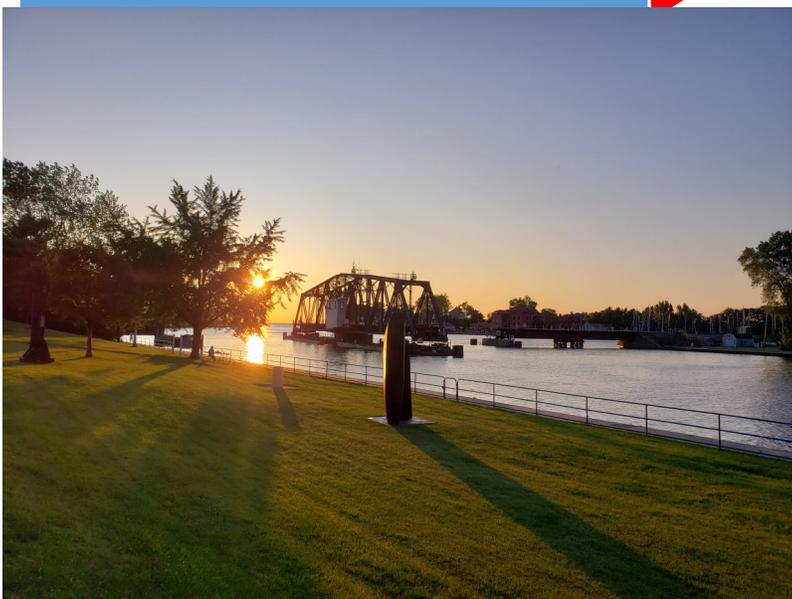
Blue

Sin

Self centeredness/ greed/ covertness

Fruits of the Holy Spirit

**Charity (or Love)/ Kindness/
Chasity**



Who do we need to bring in the circle?

Who do we need to pray for?

Family members who are sick.

Family members who have died.

Struggles that we are facing?

Let us bring our joys and sufferings
onto this circle.



There are some areas of history, culture and spirituality of Native Americans/ Alaska Natives that have become the bases of inculturation in Catholic liturgies. These elements respect and encourage faith in Christ. There are certain historical elements in Native American/ Alaskan Native cultures that have a direct bridge from the this world to the next. These elements have as much justification to be used in liturgy as elements from European cultures. Below are some of the wider used elements of the divine, however, there are others that are specific to individual tribes and cultures. For all aspects of inculturation, there is a need to know the history and spirituality of tribes and cultures.

Smudging Rites

Smudging rites are a purification ritual which consists on burning sage or cedar. It has a long history in many Native American/ Alaskan Native spiritual rituals. For most tribes, if smudging rites are not done by Natives of that tribe, it is considered disrespectful. Smudging Rites should be used before Mass and not replace the Penitential Rite.

Smoke

Smoke has had a long history in the spiritual development of Native Americans/ Alaska Natives. Smoke was seen as a pathway to the next world. As smoke ascends, it reminds us of our prayers that are lifted up to Heaven.

Feathers/Eagles

As Charlotte Patton described in an early edition of the Signpost, in some Native Cultures eagles and hawks are seen as intercessors between the human world and the divine world. Some communities believe that souls are brought into heaven by hawks or eagles.

Shell/Bowl

Like the feather and the sage, the bowl that contains the burning sage needs to be handled with respect. The container of the sage needs to be associated with the culture and history of the tribe.



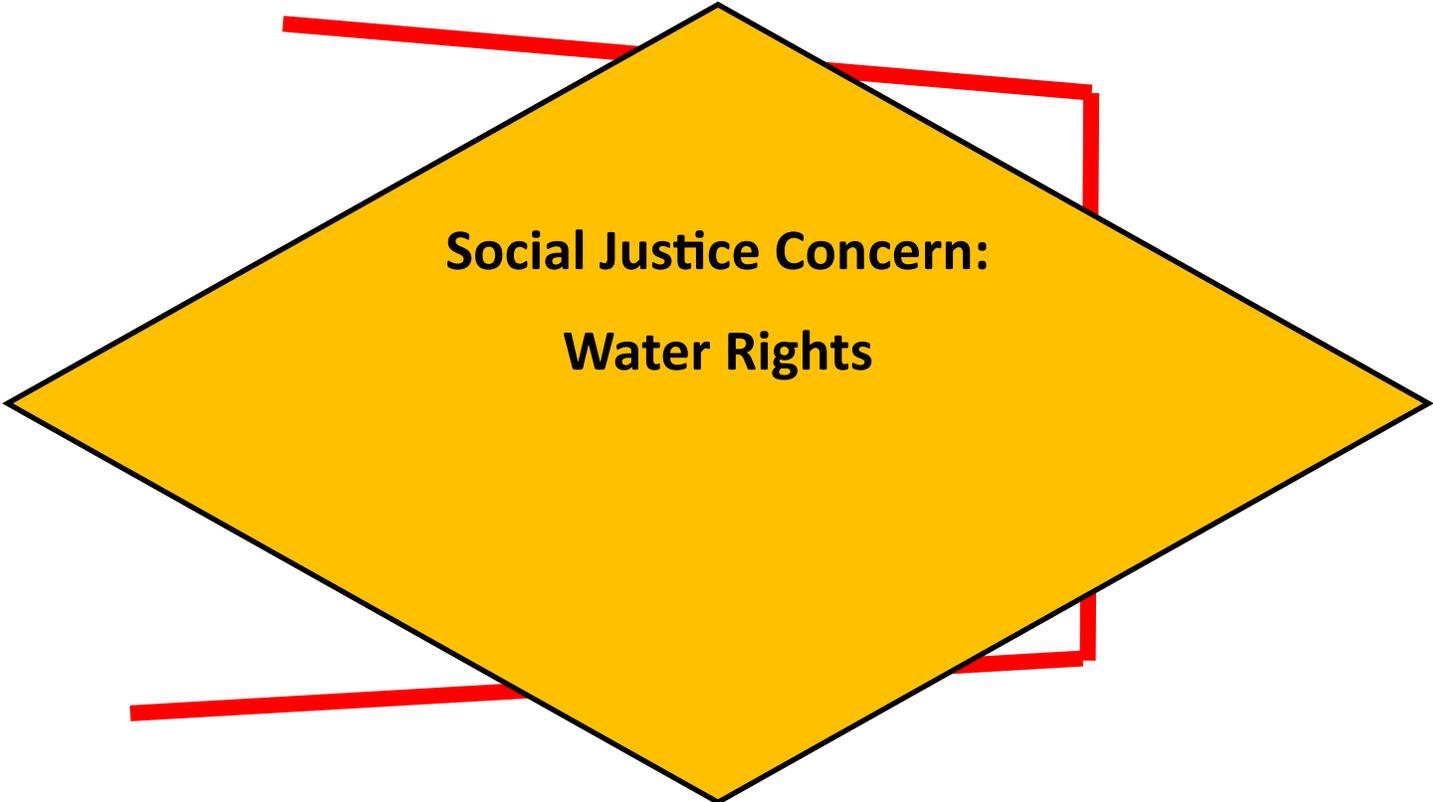
Pollen

For some Native communities, pollen is a symbol of blessings from God. It is a symbol of abundance, fertility and sanctification. Often, pollen is used as a way to bless others. Because water has a connection to baptism, the Church reserves water for blessings during Mass.

Sage/ Cedar

Sage and Cedar are most often burnt for the smudging rite. There are different elements used by different tribes. Through the smell of sage, cedar or other woods, Native communities seek purification and reconciliation.

Catholic documents are clear in that inculturation of liturgy is a necessary for evangelization. There are two important foundations for inculturation. There needs to be an understanding of the Catholic liturgical documents and also of local tribal history and spirituality.



Social Justice Concern: Water Rights

Native water rights are complex and intricate. Basically, the Supreme Court has decided that once a reservation is created, it is implied that the reservation will have access to enough water for its success. Congress has the right to determine how much is enough. Reservations have rights to both water that is under the reservation and water that is in rivers and lakes that border it. This also means that water rits were created and fixed at the time the reservation was created. Reservation water rites are not subject to subsequent changes like when the needs of the reservation's neighbors change or if the environment changes.

Because the understood water rites are thought to be developed for the success of the reservation, water rites are for all of the irrigated land in the reservation, weather the land is currently being irrigated or not. Lastly, rites to the water are not lost if the water is not currently being used.

Although these rites seem to benefit the reservation, there are three major concerns.

- 1) Congress still sets the basic water levels.
- 2) Agricultural land is considered for setting water rites, but not urban areas. Larger city populations are not considered.
- 3) Pollution and other misuses of water by reservation neighbors are not part of the water rites that reservations enjoy.

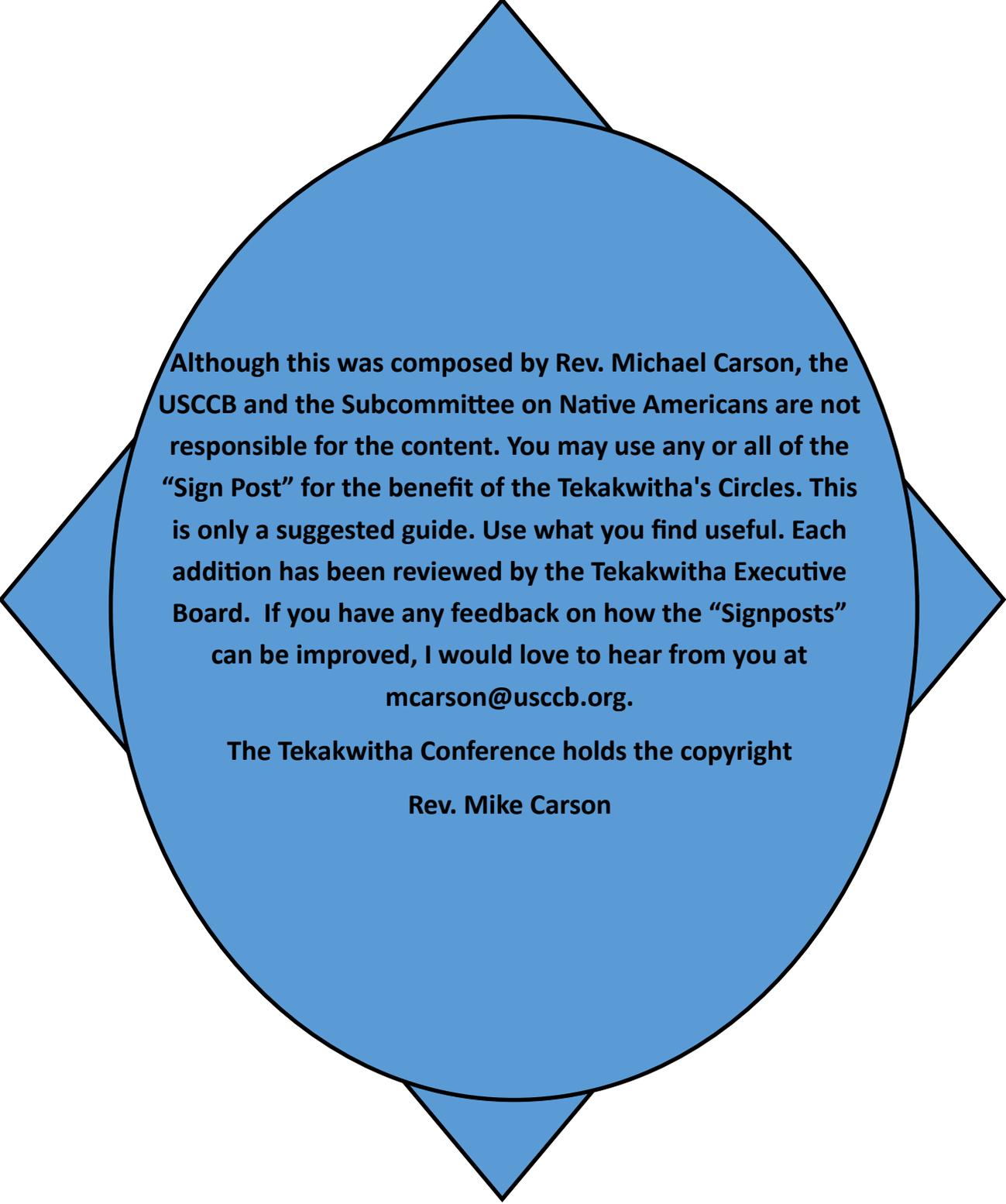


Closing prayer from the Black and Indian Mission Office:

God of all nations and peoples. You have filled your creation with Your mighty presence. Through Your handiwork You speak to our hearts words that satisfy our every desire.

You called Your servant, the Mohawk maiden Saint Kateri Tekakwitha to embrace the Gospel of your Son Jesus Christ, to do Your will and to serve others with the gifts You gave her.

May she who held tight to the cross of Your Son throughout her short life marked by sickness, suffering, and persecution, be our intercessor during our own trials. May her embrace of the Catholic faith and her openness to sharing Jesus with others inspire us to be new evangelizers to all cultures and peoples. May she who sought our Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament lead up to similar reverences for the Eucharist so that, like Saint Kateri, our last words may be, "Jesus, I love You." Amen.



Although this was composed by Rev. Michael Carson, the USCCB and the Subcommittee on Native Americans are not responsible for the content. You may use any or all of the “Sign Post” for the benefit of the Tekakwitha's Circles. This is only a suggested guide. Use what you find useful. Each addition has been reviewed by the Tekakwitha Executive Board. If you have any feedback on how the “Signposts” can be improved, I would love to hear from you at mcarson@usccb.org.

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Rev. Mike Carson